

Pisk, John

From: Pisk, John
Sent: Wednesday, March 14, 2007 3:32 PM
To: Pisk, John
Subject: SB 142

Madam Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. My friends and I are representing the Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinators Association. Our association represents emergency management for the 56 counties and 7 Indian Nations.

It is very important for us to express our views in regards to SB 142 from a local perspective. ~~With the passage of this bill, the local level of emergency management will be completely eliminated.~~ At the local level, des coordinators have been working with their local public health departments to develop ~~emergency~~ plans. That planning process at the local level and through local emergency planning committees has been very productive and has developed relationships between local public health and other response agencies that weren't there in many cases a few years ago.

Title 10 of Montana Code Annotaed is the code that gives emergency management its authority to conduct emergency management duties.

Only recently did the local emergency management community learn that a large portion of these Department of Public Health and Human Services revisions would be codified into Title 10 of the Montana Code Annotated.

Our concern with this is that Title 10 has evolved from nuclear specific threats to an all hazard document that has served well for all hazard events for years. It is applicable to any disaster or emergency; fire, flood, drought, civil unrest, and public health situations as well as others. Our opposition does not stem from a distrust ~~anyone should~~ for public health at any level; we oppose this bill because it will specifically define the roles and responsibilities of a specific agency. **IN TO TITLE 10***

* This whole bill is duplicating a system and process that already exists. Agency specific roles and responsibilities belong in the State Emergency Operations Plan. The State of Montana Division of Disaster and Emergency Services is given the authority in Title 10 to coordinate a plan with state agencies to identify roles and responsibilities and lead coordinating agencies. This plan is and has been adopted the Governor. All state agencies concur with the plan and have signed off on the plan. This is where Public Health gets and has the identity as a lead coordinating agency that they are proposing that this legislature codify into law. What State Public Health is proposing to be law is already required of them by the Governor and already exists. When an emergency or disaster is declared at the state level, the emergency operaions plan is then activated And those roles, responsibilities are then required to be executed by the identified lead agency and all supporting agencies, which is exactly what public health is proposing. If Public Health isn't comfortable with there position or identity, then that needs to be solidified in the already required state plan, not in the passage of a new law.

A significant concern for the association is that if this bill passes, we believe that other agencies will want to be specifically codified into law. This is absolutely unnecessary. They are already required to be identified in the state plan and ordered to perform their duties by the Governor.

~~For example, local fire response is not a hazard, state public health is not a hazard, etc.~~